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Pentagon Papers Finale

The hassle over secret papers printed by newspapers which failed to offer the government a chance to see them is about to subside just as government officials in Washington and reporters who have long covered the scene have come to the conclusion that the printed papers, the Pentagon study ordered by Robert MacNamara when he was Defense Secretary, give a distorted and limited view of the origins of the war.

Former President Lyndon Johnson suspects they were to be campaign ammunition for the late Robert Kennedy. They could have also been partly designed to firmly establish, historically, McNamara's opposition to the war from 1967 onward.

The authors, however, did not have access to records of most of the White House decision-making, they did not apparently have full access to either CIA files or State Department files. They were mostly Harvard professors dealing in theory and working with Pentagon records.

There are large gaps in the summaries drawn from these papers, wrong conclusions and much distortion. But much information also came out of them. And they prompted many of those involved to speak out. But the authoritative analysis of the origins and fatal steps into the Vietnam quagmire is yet to be written — based on all the documents, and facts.